

Military use of Haleakala National Park

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Maui, the second largest of the Hawaiian Islands, grew from two volcanoes. These are the older, deeply eroded West Maui mountains, and the younger, only recent dormant Haleakala. At the summit of Haleakala is a vast crater which has long attracted scientists and the general public to its volcanic, ethnographic and botanical riches. When in 1916 Congress sought to preserve Hawaii's outstanding features, it included an area of over 21,000 acres at the summit of Haleakala in the new Hawaii National Park. The highest point at the summit is 10,023 feet.

The objectives of the National Park Service and those of other Federal agencies are often in conflict. Because of its geographical location, these conflicts were particularly noticeable in Hawaii National Park during and following World War II. The summit of Haleakala was especially attractive to the military organizations because it contained easily accessible, undeveloped, Federal land. As the military planners tend to overlook time, money and aesthetic intangibles in the name of current defense necessity, to maintain any Park values, the National Park Service has been repeatedly obliged to thwart, delay and return via proper channels the frequent military plans for Haleakala. The National Park Service was thus in the unpopular position of opposing programs the military claimed were absolutely vital for the national defense.

The September 10, 1945 issue of *Time* magazine carried an article claiming that the National Park Service had delayed the installation of important radar devices at Haleakala, thereby aiding the Japanese

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attack. Hawaii National Park Superintendent Edward G. Wingate prepared a memorandum for Associate National Park Service Director Demaray detailing the facts in the matter.¹ They make interesting reading. This chronological record covers correspondence from July 18, 1940 through February 1, 1943.

In brief, the Army sought sites on both Haleakala and Mauna Loa for "unspecified defense installations." A "thorough" study was referred to, but only the very tops of both peaks were surveyed. It was determined that the "two sites selected in the National Park offer the only sites which are suitable for these proposed defense purposes." The National Park sites were "not only the most suitable but also the only acceptable sites." The Mauna Loa site was approved by the National Park Service for Army use in November 1940, but no work was ever done there by the Army.

The Haleakala location, atop Red Hill, had been scheduled for development in the Park's water system. The National Park Service recommended a site just outside the Park, on Kolekole peak, with more level ground and even better visibility, but for unspecified reasons this was rejected by the Army and a restudy of the Haleakala summit produced no new sites. The Army still wanted Red Hill and sought the withdrawal of several acres there for the "defense installation," plus additional acreage lower down the slope for a support camp

By April 1941, the War and Interior Departments had worked out an agreement for the use of the area. A Special Use Permit was signed on April 29, 1941, covering a six acre installation site at Red Hill, and the Army agreed to use for its base camp the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp at the 7,000 foot elevation which would be vacated by the CCC in May 1941. Work soon began on a road extension up to Red Hill and on a steel tower at the summit. A water catchment dam, of unauthorized size and location, was started. The Red Hill installation, however, was not operational on December 7, 1941, some seven months after approval for the work had been granted by the National Park Service; and the new telephone line to Red Hill was not even started until January 1942. Army Engineers finally completed the installation of all Army equipment at Red Hill in May 1942.

The Aircraft Warning Service System (AWS) thus constructed was operated intermittently until March 1943 when the facility was abandoned except for a few guards to protect the property. It was abandoned because it didn't work. The 360 degree clear line allowed radar signals to bounce back to the station from 360 degrees,

causing a confusing "echo." Later radar sites were located so as to minimize the echo by placing them against a solid background.

Haleakala, closed on December 7, 1941, was partially re-opened to the public in October 1942, and completely opened for public day use on February 1, 1943.

In November 1943, the Army again approached Superintendent Wingate for permission to construct a communication station at Red Hill. The Army assumed that there would be no problem as there was already a Special Use Permit for the desired area, and the agreement was between two agencies of the Federal government. Wingate again sought assurance that Red Hill was the only suitable site, and that the installation was not permanent. He suggested that the new request be processed through regular channels.

It soon became clear that the Army considered this new project a continuation of the previously abandoned AWS and thus, in effect, already approved. For its part, the National Park Service saw a new, permanent, unauthorized installation which, if allowed, might be merely the beginning of additional requests. The Army began actual construction at Red Hill in April 1944, five months after contacting Wingate, but still without having applied for authorization from the Interior Department. When told by Park Service personnel that such activity had *not* been approved, the Army indicated that they intended to go ahead with the work, and would tear it all down again should Washington disapprove. The heavy construction at Red Hill was damaging the site. The peak had already been leveled off, thereby reducing Maui's highest elevation by several feet. A new brick power house and another large brick building were going up although the work stopped for a time midway when the supply of bricks ran out. Most distressing of all were the 90-foot radio poles with red lights atop, soon dubbed the "Haleakala National Forest." All of this was presented as "essential to the successful prosecution of the war in this area." [In April 1944, the Allies had successfully concluded the naval battles at Midway and the Philippine Sea, and the landings at Guadalcanal and Kwajalein. Nevertheless, General Richardson, Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department, testified in a *habeas corpus* case on April 11, 1944, that the Japanese were still capable of attacking Hawaii either from air or from the sea]. None of the construction conformed to the provisions of the Special Use Permit of April 29, 1941.

The problem soon reached the Departmental level. On October 24, 1944, Secretary of War Stimson wrote Secretary of Interior Fortas asking for a new permit to replace the old one for Red Hill.

There was, as justification for this latest assault on the Park, a "military necessity" for the construction and operation of a "Radio Station" there. A permanent permit would not be possible, replied Fortas, but one for the "duration and six months" might be worked out. The permanency of the installation was the key point, and the War Department indicated that it was preparing a report. If it were to be permanent, the land would have to be removed from the Park by Congressional action, a time-consuming process.

Even the withdrawal of the desired acreage would not really solve the problem. Superintendent Wingate visited Haleakala in December 1944 and reported on the damage. He felt that the installation was clearly of a permanent nature, and it was very visible from both inside and outside the crater; no amount of boundary legislation could remove the eyesore. "And it is all unnecessary in this particular spot," wrote Wingate to the Director.²

Nevertheless, it remained. A revised Special Use Permit for the Red Hill site was signed on April 11, 1945. It authorized the use of the area for a "communication station for a period not to exceed 6 months after the war."

Two months later, on June 19, 1945, Haleakala section Ranger-in-charge Frank J. Hjort, submitted a report to Superintendent Wingate on Army activities in the Haleakala section. The Pukaoao Observatory, a building the Army occasionally claimed as its own, had again been cleared of radio equipment. The Red Hill station was very prominently in operation, and an installation on Kolekole peak was operating, also staffed from the base camp at the old CCC site at Puu Niania. The Red Hill facility apparently required a clear line-of-sight with stations on the other islands. A number of sites along the south-west rift beyond Kolekole would seem to have served this purpose equally well, and it was generally felt that the Army had chosen Red Hill merely because "they already had shacks there." For this reason, and because Red Hill was an integral part of the Crater of Haleakala from both a scenic and geological point of view, withdrawal of this area from the National Park would not be an acceptable solution. Hjort suggested bargaining the withdrawal of the Puu Niania camp area from the National Park in exchange for Army withdrawal from Red Hill at the end of the war. Although the Special Use Permit the War Department had signed was only for the "duration and six months," Park personnel thought that they recognized a permanent installation no matter what the Army called it.

On August 14, 1945 the war was over; in March 1946 the six

months were up and the Army had evacuated the base camp at Puu Niania. Red Hill was not mentioned. In September 1946, Francis Oberhansley, who had replaced Wingate as Superintendent the previous July, wrote to the Commanding General, MIDPAC, about the ownership of property within the Haleakala section of the Park. Oberhansley suggested the Army consider transfer of the stripped physical plant at Puu Niania in lieu of a complete restoration of the site. Under any circumstances, he wrote, technical equipment should be removed immediately as there was no security and things were disappearing. In April 1947, the Army Engineers agreed to return the base camp at Puu Niania. There was still no mention of the Red Hill installation in this exchange.

On March 15, 1948, two years beyond the "duration and six months" specified in the Special Use Permit, Superintendent Oberhansley sent a memorandum to the Director of National Park Service Region Four, saying that the station was inoperative due to lack of power—the line was down and the standby generator ruined by freezing. Rumored plans were for the Army to abandon the Red Hill station as of March 15. If this were true, Oberhansley suggested the National Park Service take immediate steps to hold the Army strictly to the terms of the Special Use Permit in the matter of site restoration. Once gone, the Army was thought unlikely to return for any site restoration work.

The concern was premature. The site, reported the Army on April 2, was indeed being abandoned as a radar station, but now the Air Force needed it for "highly classified" equipment.

Once again, the Park Superintendent asked for details of the nature of this new installation, its permanency, and the reasoning by which the Air Force, already installed on Kolekole, sought a new site on Red Hill. The Army replied with a detailed background analysis of the prior "joint use" of Red Hill by the Army and Air Force, and the now usual insistence that the Air Force had a "definite need" for Red Hill for the installation of new, highly classified equipment.

In May 1948, Superintendent Oberhansley visited Haleakala and found that the Army, Air Force, and the Mutual Telephone Company all had eyes on the Red Hill location. Park policy would not allow approval of any use of this site if it were not necessary for immediate national defense, especially when other sites were available. The Air Force did not come in, but the Army continued to claim the site for standby purposes. Even the installation of a new telephone line to serve the developing Kolekole facilities did not

seem to obviate the necessity of retaining the obsolete, de-activated "communication" structure on Red Hill.

The Superintendent's Report for June 1950 finally reported the Red Hill barracks razed and salvaged, and all 13 poles of the "Haleakala National Forest" removed for use at the Kihei signal station.

The restoration was not permanent. During the "Korean Conflict," the Special Use Permit of April 11, 1945 was extended by the Secretary of the Interior on October 24, 1950 to allow the Air Force to continue its "temporary use" of the Red Hill site until six months after the termination of hostilities. On October 22, 1953 the Air Force declared its entire Haleakala installation "excess" and entered negotiations with the National Park Service for its disposal. The military, however, balked at site restoration, and the National Park Service refused to take over the buildings.

Early in 1955, with the future of Red Hill still unsettled, the University of Hawaii joined the petitioners. They sought the Air Force buildings on Red Hill for use as a "geophysical observatory." In a letter dated January 14, 1955, the Director of National Park Service Region Four warned the Director of the National Park Service of this proposed University of Hawaii installation. The buildings at Red Hill were an eyesore, and once established there, it was very likely the facility would wish to expand its operations. He further pointed out that a similar Weather Bureau project on Mauna Loa was not functioning. The University, however, was given permission to use the site in April for a "coronagraph" study.

In July the Air Force was again talking of long term use, instead of the six months they originally proposed during the upcoming nuclear testing. In December, the Navy was using the old Air Force installations, the nature of the project not known to the National Park Service. In January 1956, the Air Force was using the buildings, but vacated the site in August and most of the buildings were removed. In February 1958 the Air Force again requested the use of Red Hill for two months, later extended to four months, and the National Park Service granted the request. The Air Force used trailers and the remaining Red Hill buildings; there was no new construction.

The final military threat to Red Hill came from the Hawaii Air National Guard (HANG). Public Law 86-149 of August 10, 1959 authorized the construction of 2 HANG radar stations for the defense of the Islands. During May 1959 the Air Force, with some HANG officers, undertook an on-the-ground investigation of the Haleakala

summit area without bothering to contact the National Park Service. (They expressed indignation when the Service protested.) There were rumors of a large, new Red Hill base, but when queried in August, the Air Force reported that nothing had been decided on the size or location of any new camp, and they also admitted that the Special Use Permit for the use of Red Hill had expired. In a letter dated August 3, 1959, the Air Force advised the Interior Department that the HANG had been instructed "that they shall take no action such as preparation of plans until complete agreement of the National Park Service has been obtained." However, there were plans already prepared to put the necessary large towers outside the Park with the support buildings in the Red Hill hollow. The National Park Service pointed out that if the towers could go outside the Park, the entire project could go outside the Park. The Interior Department wrote the Secretary of the Air Force, Dudley C. Sharp, on December 30, 1959, outlining the National Park Service position on such intrusive and discordant developments. The Air Force was asked to review its plans. "If this cannot be done and no other possible alternative can be found, we are agreeable to a re-examination."³

Pressure was then applied to the Hawaii State Government through senators Hiram Fong, Oren Long, and later, Dan Inouye, and Hawaii Governor William Quinn. It was threatened that if the first choice Haleakala site was not approved, additional funds would be needed. In that case, the entire project ran the risk of being delayed or scrapped entirely, with a heavy loss of military spending in Hawaii. Quinn recognized three national policies in conflict: preservation of National Parks; adequate defense for Hawaii; and budgetary limitations. He preferred to bend the budgetary one first, and asked the Congressmen for additional information.

Then on May 12, 1960, Robert Hiatt, Dean and Director of Research at the University of Hawaii, wrote HANG's General Valentine Siefertman. Hiatt had a number of questions on the operation of the proposed radar equipment and how it might effect the University's research program at Kolekole. "It is our considered opinion that radioastronomy . . . would be impossible on Haleakala with the radar station on either Red Hill or Kolekole. At the National Radio Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia, no low powered radio transmitters of any kind are allowed within 50 miles."⁴ The Hawaiian Astronomical Society at its meeting May 3, 1960, went on record opposing a radar tracking station at Haleakala and Quinn asked if the Air Force had checked out this possible problem.

Local commercial broadcasters also expressed concern and the Air Force prepared agreements with several stations to guarantee no interference, and to close the station until any interference was eliminated [!]—except in case of national emergency.

In the face of this opposition, the Air Force turned its consideration to its third choice site on Kolekole peak. (Their second choice was White Hill, lower than Red Hill, but still within the Park.) In a letter to Quinn dated April 13, 1960 Sieferman noted that until recently HANG had insisted that Red Hill was the only feasible site, but recent technical advances "will make it feasible to locate this equipment at the alternate site [ie, Kolekole]."

This new Air Force interest in Kolekole produced an even more vigorous response from the University scientists. Hiatt wrote to Governor Quinn (via Senator Fong) asking no hasty action on the Kolekole site and saying radar was incompatible with the observatory. "Moreover, it is highly doubtful that any scientific activity can be carried on anywhere at the summit with the radar unit in operation." A great deal of money had already been spent on the Observatory, he said, and more was being appropriated. "The fact that Kolekole Peak is the third choice of the Air National Guard indicates that other sites might be sought to serve about as well and still not effect or eradicate existing activities in Hawaii. In any event, full scale investigation should be made before any change occurs in the activities on Haleakala."⁵

Through the summer of 1960, the scientific community at the University and their financial supporters at the National Science Foundation and the Smithsonian Institute continued to express "deep concern" over the proposed installation of radar on the summit of Haleakala. A meeting in November, however, produced some changes. A letter dated November 15, 1960 from the Department of Defense to the National Science Foundation reported: "Dr. Hiatt agreed that if the Air Force radar is installed on Red Hill, which is approximately 1,800 feet from the University facility, that this will be satisfactory."⁶ This figure is not quite the 50 miles Hiatt had mentioned in May. The National Park Service no longer had the support of the University scientists in opposing the HANG radar station on Red Hill.

The Air Force position was summed up in a letter from Brigadier General Chickering, USAF, dated January 17, 1961. He claimed that the Air Force had planned since 1948 to reactivate Red Hill and had only been waiting new, improved radar equipment and funds for the construction of the facility. Congress had approved the

project and provided the funds in 1959 [11 years later.] Objections by broadcasting stations and the University of Hawaii-Smithsonian Institute Observatory had been resolved. "Exhaustive" surveys showed this was the best single radar site. When NPS Director Conrad Wirth had toured Haleakala in early January 1960, explaining to the Air Force the National Park Service policy on in-holdings, the Air Force had clarified its position for him. "This admirable principle is fully understandable," said Chickering, "except when applied at the expense of national defense and survival." Director Wirth then mentioned National Park Service plans for the development of Red Hill and the Air Force had suggested combining the facilities. The Service, however, reported Chickering, stubbornly insisted on going ahead with "unilateral" plans for the development of Red Hill. In the interest of economy "and to prevent construction of permanent Park Service facilities [in a National Park] incompatible with defense requirements," Chickering requested immediate action by the Executive, or by Court order if necessary, to suspend further planning until the USAF request for use of the site had been resolved.⁷ At about the same time Secretary of the Interior Seaton wrote the Defense Department noting that other agencies with site requirements based on "extreme urgency" had been turned down, and had found other locations outside the Park.

Local agencies delayed action until the problem could be solved in Washington. On April 26, 1961, Hiatt wrote Congressmen Inouye and Long saying that Director Wirth still opposed Red Hill and recommended Kolekole. Wrote Hiatt: "As you know we settled the matter of mutual habitation on Haleakala by having the Department of Defense agree to put the radar installation on Red Hill, which is higher and better for their purposes, and the University to put its observatory on Kolekole Peak. This agreement was arranged at the highest level of the Department of Defense, the National Science Foundation which is sponsoring the University's observatory, and the Smithsonian Institution, which, with the University, operates one of the twelve United States Satellite tracking stations immediately adjacent to Kolekole Peak." The National Park Service, administrator of the area, was not included in this settlement of mutual habitation. Any change in plans, said Hiatt, could result in the loss of the tracking station, the observatory project, and assorted National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) funds. Hiatt asked that the Congressmen insist the radar go on Red Hill as originally planned and that the National Park Service be asked

to take a more reasonable attitude on the "highest and best use of those few acres of barren land on one corner of their vast holdings on the summit of Haleakala."⁸ Inouye brought this problem to the attention of Director Wirth who pointed out that Congress had already decided the "highest and best use of those few barren acres" by making them part of a National Park.

All interested agencies agreed to have the University on Kolekole and the HANG radar station on Red Hill; all, that is, except the National Park Service which had not been consulted and whose objections were discounted as based on mere aesthetics which could hardly stand before the fact of national defense necessity. Moreover, the Red Hill proponents insisted the radar station wouldn't seriously detract from the vista.

Congress, however, by Act of September 13, 1960, had established a separate National Park of the Haleakala section of Hawaii National Park, and the new Haleakala National Park included the peak of Red Hill.

In January 1962, Governor Quinn asked the Air Force about the radar site, specifically asking if the Haleakala location had not been abandoned in favor of one on Oahu. On January 3, 1962, he wrote to Senator Fong saying that effort should be spent promoting a joint-use facility with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on Mt. Kaala on Oahu, rather than trying to obtain the Haleakala site. A few days later the Air Force announced they had abandoned plans for a radar station on Haleakala.

Some background for this reversal may be found in a letter from Haleakala Superintendant Stratton to the Director of National Park Service Region Four, dated September 12, 1961. It detailed a meeting that day during which Governor Quinn was informed by General Sieferman that the requirements of Red Hill was "budgetary." Quinn thereupon withdrew his support of the military use of Red Hill. On October 18, 1961, Regional Director Merriam wrote to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Superintendent Johnston that as far as the Secretary of the Interior was concerned, the Red Hill issue was to be considered dead.

The HANG radar station was eventually built on Mt. Kaala. The Red Hill site was turned back to the National Park Service under an excess property declaration, and a tourist facility built thereon. Although construction of the Red Hill Observatory eliminated requests for permanent installations, the site is still desirable for temporary military use. In September 1965 the Department of Defense requested the use of the area from 15 September to

15 December for a satellite tracking station. This request was granted. A note of thanks was received for the use of the Observatory site, and the Park staff noted that the site had been returned in perfect condition. Other groups have also had short term permits to use the Red Hill location for scientific programs. These installations did not always meet with approval from "Science City" neighbors. The Director of the University's Haleakala Observatory on one occasion wrote the Superintendent of Haleakala National Park to ask that the Observatory please be advised of any future permits so summit activities could be coordinated. They had just recently had to ask another group to lower its antenna so as not to interfere with the Observatory. "Science City" was becoming crowded.

The Puu Nianiau base camp, later used by a Park concessioner, was vacated in late 1961 and these buildings then became desirable in the eyes of various Federal agencies seeking facilities on Haleakala. To forestall requests for the use of the site, the National Park Service asked the General Services Administration to initiate action for the removal of the structures early in 1962. Before a contract could be awarded, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) requested the buildings for staff housing during *Operation Dominic*, scheduled for later in the year. The Superintendent at Haleakala National Park refused the request on policy grounds and the AEC then made application through the Department of Defense. There was strong feeling on all levels of the National Park Service that there should be no new precedent-making arrangements of this sort with sister Federal agencies. Although the AEC produced arguments which suggested their requirements were based on convenience rather than need, a six month Special Use Permit was issued on February 26, 1962. The AEC was to use the existing buildings for room and board only, and were to vacate no later than September 1, 1962. On August 8, 1962, Superintendent Stratton at Haleakala wrote the Director of the Western Regional Office: "It will come as no surprise to you that the AEC has this date requested an extension of the permit for use of the former Silver Sword Inn in Haleakala National Park."⁹ *Operation Dominic* was scheduled for completion by the end of the year and the AEC was granted a new permit to run through December 31, 1962. It was strongly urged that the buildings be razed as soon after the AEC had vacated as was possible; the Department of Defense had other installations scheduled for Kolekole, and private organizations were again asking about the area for group camping. The AEC vacated the area in November, turned

over some housekeeping supplies to the Park at no cost, and the old CCC camp-World War II base camp-concessioner Inn buildings were finally removed. The area has been vacant since then, with only shops and stables remaining in the vicinity.

As early as May 1962 the FAA had requested the use of the same area for its new its new facility at the 7,000 foot level. Superintendent Stratton again replied that such developments were against policy and pointed out that earlier use of the area had been military or defense oriented. The FAA then asked for access to a housing site beyond the Inn area just outside the Park on Haleakala Ranch land. This would still have required tapping the Park water and power lines, and would make closing out the Inn buildings that much more difficult. The Park has only a limited supply of water which at times required rationing to cover staff and visitor needs. Petitioning agencies rarely questioned the water or power supply, assuming that both were readily available.

The request was finally denied when it again became clear that the site decision was based on convenience and economy rather than unique need. The FAA finally agreed to a site location just outside the Park, near the Hosmer Grove picnic area, but within the section once proposed for the Keanae addition. The National Park Service granted the FAA a Revocable Use Permit for 20 years, dated December 22, 1964, for a power line across the Park. A new permit was issued in 1966 to accommodate changes in alignment of the underground power cable. The FAA troposcatter tower was completed in the summer of 1965.

There are now no non-Park installations on the summit of Haleakala or elsewhere within the Park boundaries, but the adjacent summit area around Kolekole peak, just outside the Park and at present accessible only through the Park, has been developed as "Science City." In some quarters it is known as the "scientific slum." It is readily visible from many locations outside the Park, but cannot be seen from within the crater. Science City and the FAA troposcatter tower located just outside the Park boundary at the 7,000 foot elevation, are both serviced from Wailuku and Kahului. At the present time, the only access to either site is via the State Highway and Park Highway to the summit of Haleakala.

NOTES

Two files provide most of the source material for this report. They are: National Park Service-Hawaii National Park file: 601-05.1, hereafter cited as *HNP*;

and, Archives of Hawaii, Governor's Files-Quinn, Defense, Haleakala Radar Site, hereafter cited as *AH*.

¹ HNP, September 14, 1945.

² HNP, December 7, 1944.

³ AH, December 30, 1959.

⁴ AH, May 12, 1960.

⁵ AH, April 27, 1960.

⁶ AH, November 15, 1960.

⁷ AH, January 17, 1961.

⁸ AH, April 26, 1961.

⁹ NPS-HNP file: 30, August 8, 1962.